

Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs

Version 3.0



Introduction

Dietitians Australia (**DA**) is the peak body of dietetic and nutrition professionals in Australia. As a self-regulated health profession, DA delegates regulatory functions, including the accreditation of dietetic education programs, to an independent regulatory authority.

Dietitians have a defined and recognisable body of knowledge and use scientific principles and methods in the study of nutrition and dietetics, applying these results to influence the wider environment affecting food intake and eating behaviour. The scope of dietetic practice is such that dietitians may work in a variety of settings and have a variety of work functions¹.

The regulation of the dietetic profession serves to ensure practitioners are safe, professional and effective in practice, and the communities in which they serve can have trust and confidence in the care they receive.

Dietitians Australia is a member of the National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (**NASRHP**)². All accredited dietetic education programs must meet benchmarked NASRHP standards for regulation and accreditation of programs.

The Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (**the Standards**) set the minimum accepted standards for program accreditation. This includes ensuring that graduate dietitians have demonstrated competence as described in the National Competency Standards (**NCS**)³. The Standards are used to determine whether a program of study produces graduates who have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise dietetics in Australia.

The Standards should be used alongside two companion accreditation documents, the Processes for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs (**the Processes**) and the Evidence Guide for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs (**the Guide**).

History of Australian dietetic accreditation standards

The first dietetic accreditation standards were published in 1994 under the title Dietitians Association of Australia Accreditation Manual (**the Manual**). The Manual was reviewed in 2005, 2006 and 2007, before undergoing a major revision in 2016.

In 2017, the Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs were released and published alongside two companion documents, the **Processes** and the **Guide**.

Standards version history

Version	Date	Section	Details
3.0	April 2022		Release of revised Standards
2.0	January 2017	–	Release of revised document with new title 'Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs'.
Revision history of previous title "Accreditation Manual"			
1.3	October 2015	–	Updated staff titles and unit names
1.2	October 2011	Section 3.2 Sections 3.1 & 4 Section 3.9	Updated placement language, external advisory committees, processes for new programs, wording on dietetic course material and websites
1.1	December 2010	Section 5	Core fields of study updated
1.0	September 2010	–	Release of revised document

The Standards review process

The publication of the 2022 Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs is the result of significant collaborative work undertaken by the Australian Dietetics Council (ADC), Dietitians Australia staff and the Accreditation Standards Review (ASR) Working Group across the period of 2020–2022.

A project officer and ASR Working Group were appointed to lead the review, independent of the ADC. The working group members were appointed based on their expertise in accreditation standards. See acknowledgments section for membership of the ASR Working Group. The Working Group considered outcomes from a comprehensive accreditation benchmarking review across all Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency professions and self-regulated health professions, along with relevant literature informing dietetics workforce statistics, graduate preparation and preparedness and future needs. In addition, evaluation data from the implementation of the 2017 Standards was considered.

The draft Standards were released for multiple rounds of consultation with key stakeholder groups and members of the professions. The most recent consultation round in February 2022 including companion document, the Guide.

The final version of the Standards and Guide were reviewed and approved by the ADC and endorsed by the Dietitians Australia Board in March 2022.

Acknowledgements

The publication of this document is the result of collaborative work undertaken by many people and we would like to acknowledge the ADC, DA staff and the ASR Working Group members: Professor Danielle Gallegos, Professor Prue Morgan, Ms Eithne Irving, Dr Louise Mainvil (Adviser), Dr Penny Field (Adviser).

Using the Standards

There are three companion documents relating to accreditation that are used to inform and support each review:

1. Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (this document)

Details the minimum requirements that universities need to demonstrate to gain accreditation for their dietetics education program(s) and that universities must continue to meet to maintain their accreditation.

2. Processes for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs

Sets out the processes for the accreditation application stages, the Non-Domestic Placement Site Approval Process, a decisions review procedure, the rights of termination and withdrawal of an Accreditation Status, and the timing and procedural requirements for both DA and the university.

3. Evidence Guide for Dietetics Education Program Providers

This is designed to assist universities that are applying for accreditation with submitting sufficient evidence for meeting the Standards.

There is also a separate process for new programs to have their program 'qualified'. This is outlined in the Process for Qualification of New Dietetics Education Programs.

Further information

Universities are encouraged to contact the ADC via the Accreditation Services Officer with any questions or feedback on the Standards, Processes and Guide, at accreditationadmin@dietitiansaustralia.org.au

Universities with an accredited program are required to notify the ADC should there be any changes to their program that may impact on their ability to meet the Standards.

Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Program Management

- 1.1 The university implements program quality improvement processes and integration of changes in relation to intended program outcomes.
- 1.2 The university implements regular and diverse internal and external consultation as part of continuous quality improvement and evaluation of curriculum, providing evidence of the outcomes of consultation and integration of recommendations.
- 1.3 Processes are in place to ensure students entering dietetics education program(s) meet the necessary entry requirements and standards, including advanced standing requirements.
 - 1.3.1 International students who enrol in the dietetics education program must meet the current National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions minimum English language proficiency requirements for either the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Occupational English Test (OET).
- 1.4 The university implements strategies for recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Standard 2: Staffing

- 2.1 The university must employ an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) discipline lead who is committed to the advancement of the profession of dietetics in Australia and who currently meets the following criteria:
 - 2.1.1 Leads original contributions to their field of research/study, which are recognised as outstanding nationally or internationally as leading the profession OR original contributions to teaching, such as contributions to national efforts to enhance curriculum and providing high-quality learning experiences in nutrition and dietetics.
 - 2.1.2 A sustained record of effective leadership in teaching teams (curriculum design, implementation and innovations leading to improvements in student learning).
 - 2.1.3 Capacity to lead developments in education quality, which enhance major aspects of the university's operations through program management, curriculum development, faculty and institutional teaching roles.
 - 2.1.4 Capacity to provide leadership with a significant impact on education quality, teaching innovation or curriculum development in their institution.
- 2.2 The university employs sufficient staff to lead curriculum, research, teaching and assessment that meets the evolving educational, academic, research, and administrative needs of students and the university.
- 2.3 All staff with a research allocation are provided with adequate time and supportive leadership to build their research/evaluation capacity and supervise research students.
- 2.4 All teaching staff must demonstrate current content knowledge and expertise in their teaching area.
- 2.5 University staff partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in the development of curriculum content and processes which build students' culturally safe and responsive practice.

Standard 3: Curriculum

- 3.1 Program curriculum includes integrated teaching, learning and assessment that meets current and emerging areas of practice, enabling students to meet the National Competency Standards (NCS).
- 3.2 Human sciences must underpin the application of science in nutrition and dietetic practice, taught within an evidence-based paradigm.
- 3.3 The university is ultimately responsible for holistic, integrated assessment of students against the NCS.
- 3.4 The university must provide access to adequate and well-maintained physical and electronic resources for education and research to support students achieve the NCS, including, but not limited to:
 - a) digital tools for dietary analysis and statistics software
 - b) facilities for food skills and experiences with food services and systems
 - c) facilities for laboratory skill technique development
 - d) technologies that provide opportunity to develop enhanced communication skills.
- 3.5 The university ensures students work with, and learn from and about, other professionals and key stakeholders in nutrition and dietetics, and offers experiences for working and learning in interprofessional teams.
- 3.6 The university integrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history, health, wellbeing and culture across the curriculum such that students can respond respectfully when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Standard 4: Professional Placement Program

- 4.1 The dietetics education program includes supervised workplace learning experiences, organised by the university, that support students to meet the NCS, the duration of which must be a minimum of 100 equivalent working days across the duration of the program.
- 4.2 Each student is provided with a variety of workplace learning experiences reflecting socio-ecological approaches to health, major health priorities and the broad landscape of dietetic practice, including policy and the provision of services and care to individuals, groups, communities and populations, which allows them to meet the NCS.
- 4.3 Appropriate governance structures and resources are in place at workplace learning experience sites to ensure adequate supervision, support, teaching, learning and assessment for students, and that supervisors are adequately supported and trained.
- 4.4 Processes are in place to ensure all supervisors responsible for workplace learning experiences have current qualifications and experience relevant to the areas they are supervising, and APDs undertake the summative assessment of dietetic-specific skills.
- 4.5 The university and placement sites must implement quality management of supervision and assessment.
- 4.6 Should the university wish to use international placement sites, they must demonstrate that the placement experience meets all requirements set out in standards 4.1 to 4.5 and that the placement provides an environment that supports students to demonstrate the NCS.
- 4.7 Students who complete placements at an international site must complete the majority of their placement in an Australian setting.

Glossary of terms

Terms not otherwise defined below are defined in the Processes for the Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs.

Accreditation: The process through which a university's dietetics education program demonstrates that it produces or will produce competent dietitians.

Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD): A dietitian who has successfully completed a tertiary dietetics education program (which holds an Accreditation Status) who is awarded the credential of APD by DA through its Accredited Practising Dietitian program (**APD Program**).

Attributes: The knowledge, skills and attitudes that together underlie competent professional performance.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF): The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework (see <http://www.aqf.edu.au/>).

Australian setting: sites that are geographically located within Australia including states, territories and external territories.

Board: means the board of directors of DA, which ultimately determines whether or not a dietetic education program offered by a university satisfies the requirements of a particular Accreditation Status.

Competence: The attribute of a person's practice in context.

Competency: A combination of skills underlying some aspect of successful dietetic performance.

Curriculum: Detailed outline of areas of study in dietetics education.

Dietetics: The profession that contributes to the promotion of health and the treatment of illness by optimising the nutrition of communities and individuals. It utilises scientific principles and methods in the study of nutrition and applies these to influence the wider environment affecting food intakes and eating behaviours.

Dietitian: A scientist who applies nutrition knowledge to the promotion of health and the primary prevention and the treatment of disease in accordance with stated scientific principles.

Discipline: A body of knowledge in an academic setting.

Discipline Lead: The senior person responsible for providing leadership, and for mentoring, but not necessarily managing, the other academics in the discipline.

Evidence Guide (Guide): A document prepared by DA with input from universities to assist universities that are applying for accreditation with submitting sufficient evidence for meeting the Standards. It encompasses contexts for assessment, how units may be linked, and particular aspects of knowledge and skill required for competency.

Evidence-based practice: The complex and conscientious decision-making which is based not only on the best available evidence but also on clinical expertise, and patient characteristics, situations, and preferences. It recognises that care is individualised and ever-changing and involves uncertainties and probabilities.

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

Knowledge, skills and attitudes: The attributes underpinning units and elements.

NASRHP: National Agency of Self Regulating Health Professions.

National Competency Standards (NCS): Statements that describe the function of a dietitian in Australia.

International placements: sites that are not geographically located within Australia.

OET: Occupational English Test

Professional Placement Program: A supervised period of a minimum of 100 days across the duration of the program in a range of practical settings which provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate dietetic competency.

Standards: The Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (this document).

University: A university that intends to offer, or currently offers, a dietetic education program which seeks an Accreditation Status.

References

¹ Dietitians Australia. Definition of a Dietitian-Nutritionist. 2016. (Available from <https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/seeing-dietitian/what-expect/dietitian-or-nutritionist>, accessed 4 March 2022)

² National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions. Self Regulating Health Profession Peak Bodies Membership Standards. (Available from http://nasrhp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SR_Standards_Full_Dec_2.pdf, accessed 4 March 2022)

³ Dietitians Australia. National Competency Standards for Dietitians in Australia. 2021. (Available from https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/DA_NationalCompetencyStandards_2021%20%28PDF%2C%20236KB%29.pdf, accessed 4 March 2022)